

H.H. Sheikha Mozah opens International Forum on Disabled Children

Doha, April 20 (QNA) - H.H. Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser al-Missned opened the Fourth Annual International Forum on Children with Special Needs under the theme “Achieving Independence” at the Shafallah Center on Monday morning. Following is the text of H.H. Sheikha Mozah’s address at the opening of the 4th annual International Forum on Children with Special Needs:

“I am very happy to join you today in opening the 4th Annual Shafallah Forum. I would especially like to welcome our special guests. All of us here share a commitment to the integration of people with special needs-the right of every individual to be educated and to work in healthy environment- the right to be an independent and contributing member of society. It is important to come together like this to share experiences, to advocate for rights, to assess needs, and ensure policy development. And this is exactly what has happened at Shafallah. We are very proud of the work being carried on here, with the inspired help of top class faculty, dedicated students and a supportive community. Shafallah has taken its place among other state of the art centers that apply technology to social issues. Yet you can have all the technology in the world and all the good intentions as well, but without a supportive and energetic community, progress will be limited. Shafallah has done a wonderful job in advocating for people with special needs throughout the region and, in fact, the world. And without generous support of families, parents tan the larger community we would not have achieved what we have. In Qatar the State has been trying to improve the lives of all its citizens, including citizens with special need. In 2008, the State of Qatar signed the UN International Convention on Rights of People with Disabilities and in 2008 issued an Emiri Decree to ratify the principles stated in the Convention. Also, the State is working to develop better rehabilitation services, provide a suitable environment in buildings, roads and public spaces, and in training programs for institutions to encourage the inclusion of these precious citizens in the work place. In fact we have adopted legislation which requires 2% of all government jobs and those in public institutes to be set aside for people with special needs. Private business employing more than 25 people are also required to hire people with special needs. These children and families make us proud of their perseverance, oneness, and kindness. We only hope our nation, and our world, can mirror these qualities.”

The opening of the 4th annual International Forum on Children with Special Needs was attended by the first ladies of Albania, Honduras, Iceland, Panama, Poland, along with wife of the Lebanese Prime Minister Huda Senior and wife of former British Prime Minister Sherry Blair. A number of senior figures concerned with the disabled affairs and guests also attended the opening ceremony. Shortly before the opening, H.H. Sheikha Mozah met with the first ladies and discussed a number of topics listed on the Forum’s agenda. After that, H.H. Sheikha Mozah toured a paintings gallery for the student Noura Said from the Shafallah Center, and briefed about the self-acquired skills that characterize the students in the center such as self-reliance and independence which go in line with the theme of this year. In October 2008, H.H. Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser al-Missned was honored with “the Spirit of Leadership Award” for her outstanding efforts in the care of children with special needs from the US-based “Best Buddies International” organization. (QNA)

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